

**SUMMARY OF THE
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 2, 2000 (TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY)**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, March 2, 2000 at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by the committee's co-chair, Ms. Carol Batterton of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and Dr. Charles Brokopp of the Utah Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues contained on the committee's agenda.

AGENDA ITEMS

Minutes from the Feb 10 and Feb 17 meetings were reviewed and approved.

Presentation by Mr. Ralph Keaton, American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors

(ASCLD): ASCLD is a voluntary accreditation program for forensic laboratories. All of their 300 trained inspectors are volunteers. Many of the inspectors are retired crime laboratory employees. ASCLD will also be hiring 6 full-time laboratory inspectors. Although ASCLD is a voluntary program, the state of New York requires ASCLD accreditation. Several other states, including California, may be adding the requirement for ASCLD accreditation as a result of political pressure. The ASCLD Accreditation Board, separate from the organization ASCLD, is responsible for the accreditation process. Changes in the standards are voted upon by ASCLD delegate assembly every September. ASCLD is a peer evaluation of the laboratories. Inspection fees covering the cost of the inspection and annual accreditation fees are charged. A minimum fee of \$500 is charged to small laboratories. ASCLD is the only program in the US that accredits crime laboratories. ASCLD has explored accreditation of Australian crime laboratories and accredits 16 lab outside the US. ASCLD accredits about 40 percent of US crime laboratories or about 180 laboratories. ASCLD has 141 lab accreditation standards and uses checklist to increase consistency among inspectors. PT is required for seven disciplines of the crime lab. At least one PT challenge must be completed and reported annually. A Proficiency Review Committee monitors the PT program require by the ASCLD standards. ASCLD accreditation is for five years. ASCLD is not an ISO organization, however ASCLD is working on becoming an ISO organization. Laboratories are required to report annually and to keep the laboratory application current. The ASCLD Board of Directors meets five times annually. More information on ASCLD can be obtained at: **www.asclد.org**. .

Presentation by Mr. Robert Roberts, Executive Director, Environmental Council of States

(ECOS): ECOS is composed of the lead environmental official from each state. Mr. Roberts described the membership and functions for ECOS as a national, non-partisan, non-profit association of state and territorial environmental commissioners. Many of the activities correspond similar programs within the U.S. EPA. Commissioners are usually from the state department of environment, health or natural resource. ECOS was established in December 1993.

First 15 months were handled by a contractor in the Washington, DC area. Mr. Roberts was the first full time Executive Director of ECOS and first employee. ECOS is incorporated as a 501c6 organization (non-profit organization that can lobby). A second organization known as the Environmental Research Institute of the States is a 501c3 organization and is the research and education arm of ECOS. Elected officers and an Executive Committee provide leadership to ECOS. Fifty-two states and territories are active members of ECOS. ECOS is funded by state dues, grants and cooperative agreements (EPA, DOE, DOD, Army, Air Force, Navy etc.) and revenue over expenses from two meetings a year. ECOS has 11.5 FTE in their Washington office including two federal employees on loan to ECOS under the Inter-governmental Personnel Act. ECOS uses a large number of interns from graduate schools, and contracts out many business functions.

ECOS is interested in the use of quality laboratory data. ECOS is working with EPA on several data projects that might relate well with the goals of NELAC. ECOS has one affiliated association known as the Interstate Technology Regulatory Cooperation Workgroup (ITRC) that works to recognize remedial measures that are effective. This workgroup was spun off from the Western Governor's Association (WGA) and operates somewhat independently of ECOS. ECOS has helped two other environmental organizations become incorporated and could possibly help NELAC do so if that was requested. The next ECOS meeting is April 10-12 in Philadelphia, PA (Downtown Marriott). We asked Mr. Roberts if it would be appropriate and feasible for representatives from NELAC to attend and meet with ECOS, in order to brief them on the benefits of NELAC and to solicit their help in convincing EPA to continue its financial support. If anyone from NELAC wants to attend, Mr. Roberts would need to know very soon. A written request needs to be sent to Mr. Roberts to make a presentation to the ECOS directors. The committee thought it would be a good idea to have one or more representatives meet with ECOS at their meeting in Philadelphia. Several members of the committee expressed a need to work with ECOS, and to emphasize the cooperative state-federal efforts to establish laboratory accreditation. More information on ECOS can be obtained at: www.sso.org/ecos/

Mr. Roberts also suggested that we also contact the Council of State Governments (CSG) in Lexington, KY. The CSG is an "umbrella organization" that might be able to provide some assistance to NELAC. Dr. Brokopp will contact CSG. CSG is a non-government organization that does organizational work for many governmental organizations. More information on CSG can be found at: www.statesnews.org/programs/index.html

Recommendation on Initial Assessor Training: Draft recommendations were sent to committee members by Ms. Batterton. Mr. Parr indicated that 10 or 11 trainers have volunteered to teach the first two training courses. State accrediting authorities will ultimately decide who can be a laboratory assessor. Mr. Parr will contact Ms. Jeanne Hankins to discuss any concerns that she had on the draft recommendation prior to the next Board meeting on March 9, 2000.

The Transition Committee recommends the following:

1. Each representative of an approved accrediting authority who attends the entire initial training course and takes the examination should be designated as having satisfactorily completed the course. "Satisfactorily completed" means the participant in the course has attended all five days of

the course and has taken the exam.

2. A score from the exam should be provided, but should not be used to designate whether or not an individual has passed or failed the course.
3. Satisfactory completion of the assessor training course does not constitute an approved NELAC assessor.
4. Each assessor must be qualified by the accrediting authority prior to conducting laboratory assessments. Qualifications of laboratory assessors are listed in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of chapter 3 of the NELAC standards. The accrediting authority should note the assessor's performance on the course examination in the qualification process.
5. Trainers or any other individuals who attend the entire training course and take the exam should also be noted as having satisfactorily completed the course. However, those wishing to be third party assessors must also be qualified by the accrediting authority before they can be considered approved NELAC assessors. (See 6.3.3.1.2 (b)(2) of Chapter 6, NELAC Standards)

Recommendation on Expanded PT Program: Mr. Chuck Wibby indicated that the PT Committee has endorsed the following recommendations from the Transition Committee.

The Transition Committee recommends that the approved Accrediting Authorities implement the expanded PT program as follows:

1. Once the PT Committee finalizes the analyte list, and the list has been approved by the current Accrediting Authorities, the list will be made available to the laboratory community via the NELAC website.
2. Assuming Step I occurs within the next 30 days, laboratories will be expected to analyze one set of PT samples from the expanded list by July 1, 2000.
3. Laboratories must then successfully analyze another PT sample in the latter half of the year, for a total of two sets being analyzed during calendar year 2000.

The Transition Committee believes that requiring laboratories to analyze two sets of expanded PT samples by July 1 will be a significant burden on the laboratories.

This recommendation needs to be reviewed by the committee and sent to Jeanne and the 11 Accrediting Authorities.

Next meeting: March 15, 2000 4pm EST (Note: This meeting was subsequently postponed)

Action Items
Transition Committee Meeting
March 2, 2000

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Follow up with Mr. Roberts about having NELAP representatives attend the ECOS meeting in Philadelphia on April 10-12	Dr. Jackson
2.	Obtain information on Council of State Governments	Dr. Brokopp
3.	Obtain final wording on initial assessor training recommendations	Mr. Parr
4.	Forward final PT recommendation to NELAC Director and Chair	Dr. Brokopp
5.	Schedule the next committee teleconference for Thursday, March 15, at 4 p.m.	Ms. Batterton

Participants
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